This report has been prepared for the purposes of, and to accompany, the “submission” version of the emerging Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan.

This report sets out the conclusions of the NDP's Steering Group, appointed by Pitstone Parish Council, as to which sites should be designated as Local Green Spaces and the reasons for doing so. It follows the assessment by the NDP Steering Group and its specialist Sub-Groups of a considerably greater number of potential Local Green Space sites within Pitstone Parish, and takes account of the responses received during pre-submission consultation on the (larger) list of sites originally proposed for designation.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

In order for a site to qualify for designation as a Local Green Space, it must meet each of the criteria set out in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). These require that the site in question:

- is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance;
  
  (for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife)
- is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

PRINCIPLES ADOPTED

A vast number of sites were originally considered for potential designation as Local Green Spaces. Those then proposed for designation fell into one (or more) of four distinct categories:

- those (generally small) areas of Pitstone’s “built environment” which are considered most vital to its open, rural feel;
- those sites used for sports and other recreational activities;
those on the immediate periphery of the settlement with public access and in regular use by those on foot; and
those which (without necessarily offering public access) fulfil a specific function to the local community, that is reflected in the aspirations and policy objectives of the emerging Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan.

Of these, the local sites that are most demonstrably special to the community are now being promulgated for designation as Local Green Space pursuant to the “submission” version of the Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan.

PITSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The following Local Green Space designations are hereby proposed.

1. Land between The Crescent and Marsworth Road (predominantly bordering The Crescent), currently in use as informal allotments.

2. Land between The Crescent and Marsworth Road (predominantly bordering Marsworth Road and Cheddington Road), currently in use as public open space.

Together they form an essentially rectangular plot of land bordered by Marsworth Road, Cheddington Road and (on two sides) The Crescent. Each individual piece of land is triangular in shape. They are illustrated in diagrammatic form below, and numbered accordingly. A similar (albeit smaller scale) illustration also appears in the submission version of the Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan itself.
DESIGNATED SITES: COMPLIANCE WITH THE NPPF

Both of the designated sites meet the criteria set out in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

In the following pages of this report we examine the particular characteristics of these two parcels of land, on a site-by-site basis, with photographs and supporting commentary.

SITE ASSESSMENTS

Site 1

Land between The Crescent and Marsworth Road (predominantly bordering The Crescent), currently in use as informal allotments.

History

The allotments, serving what were originally council properties on The Crescent, were leased by Aylesbury Vale District Council to Pitstone Parish Council from 1983 until 2004 although they had been in use as allotments for many years beforehand. Shortly thereafter the housing functions of AVDC were transferred to Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust. The allotments themselves continue to be owned by AVDC although they are occupied by the owners or tenants of properties on The Crescent.

AVDC's position following the transfer to VAHT was that they had no desire to continue managing the site as allotments, but that ownership issues needed to be sorted out as a pre-requisite to any further action. They have now been. Since 2012 AVDC have expressed to Pitstone Parish Council their desire for the site to remain as allotments or open space. In November 2014 the Deputy Chief Executive of AVDC indicated to Pitstone Parish Council that he intended to bring about a transfer of their ownership, “for you [PPC] to manage as you wish”. In March 2015 AVDC reiterated their aspiration that the allotments remain as general open space.

Assessment

The site sits in the heart of the Pitstone community and is undeniably ‘local’ both in terms of character and size. It has for many years provided recreation for residents of The Crescent, who tend their allocated parcel as if their own, and to the wider local community, as it forms (in conjunction with the adjoining triangle owned by Buckinghamshire County Council and considered as Site 2) a valuable piece of visual open space and public amenity space that complements the 'village green' feel of the adjacent Recreation Ground on entering the centre of Pitstone.
The site is well used and equally well-maintained. It forms a setting that lends itself to, and positively encourages, social interaction and engagement not only between residents of The Crescent *inter se* but also between them and members of the wider village community. More specifically it hosts BBQs and other informal social events as well as allowing local people to plant and grow perennial fruit trees, decorative plants and bushes, as well as the annual vegetable crop. It also forms a known habitat for certain varieties of rare or protected lizard.

**Site 2 (aka “The Triangle”)**

*Land between The Crescent and Marsworth Road (predominantly bordering Marsworth Road and Cheddington Road), currently in use as public open space.*

**History**

The “other” triangle of land was purchased by Buckinghamshire County Council prior to 1984 for highway improvement works (that were never ultimately carried out). Between 1984 and 2005 it was leased to Pitstone Parish Council for use as a recreation and amenity area. Buckinghamshire County Council then declined to renew the lease but informed Pitstone Parish Council that they should “carry on managing it as if a lease were in place” (which they have continued to do). In 2012 it was first mooted by Buckinghamshire County Council that the land was potentially surplus to requirements; it was not, however, until earlier this year (and after in excess of 30 years’ uninterrupted usage as valued amenity land) that the prospect of a change of use was first mooted.

**Assessment**

The site hosts nearly two dozen trees, some of them fruit trees, as well as redcurrant and blackberry bushes that are much favoured by local residents, particularly during late summer and autumn when their produce can be harvested. The full roster includes maple, cherry, rowan, lime, apple, birch, ash and aspen. The trees are inspected and their condition reported upon on a regular basis, with ongoing pruning and remedial and/or improvement work carried out to maintain and enhance their health and appearance.

Notwithstanding the proximity of the B489 (from which it is separated by a grass verge, a wide footpath-come-cycleway, another grass verge and a low wooden fence) the site is a tranquil and relaxed area, filled with dappled light on a sunny day, that is regularly used by the local community – particularly more elderly folk – for walking their dogs or just taking ‘time out’ themselves. (It is, in fact, the only large and tranquil space available to residents in the older part of the village, and the only such space in Pitstone within walking distance of the majority of our sheltered and retirement accommodations.) The daffodil displays in the spring provide colour and brightness at the entrance to the village. It is a classic example
of the kind of public open space that plays such an important role in the health and welfare of villages such as Pitstone.

The site is tended by Pitstone Parish Council and is both visually attractive and well-maintained. It complements the ‘official’ registered village green on the opposite side of Marsworth Road and, together with it, will form an integral part of the “heart” that Pitstone so desires and which forms a core value and objective of its Neighbourhood Plan. It nonetheless has a very different ‘feel’ to the sport- and play-orientated focus of its more southerly neighbour – families with young children, and the elderly and infirm, particularly benefit from the less boisterous environment on this particular piece of land. It is a picnic site, a place for quiet contemplation, or just somewhere to stretch your legs. A gentle piece of long-standing recreation space for the timid and vulnerable that it would be wrong to deny them, or the community at large.

The wider perspective

Visually the site (in conjunction with Site 1) also plays a significant part in the ‘look and feel’ of Pitstone at a macro level. Entering from the west, for example, the narrow hedge-lined vista of Marsworth Road gives way to a sensation of ever-widening open space as one approaches, and then draws alongside, The Crescent. On nearing the roundabout this is further enhanced by the open space of the Recreation Ground on the opposite side of Marsworth Road. All approaches to Pitstone, but this one in particular, see green giving way to discrete housing, subtly stating the sincerity of the village and the community’s commitment to village life.

Whilst ostensibly a main thoroughfare, the B489 is quiet at most times and in any event has no discernible impact on the atmosphere of either Site 2 or the Recreation Ground opposite. Furthermore the planned traffic calming measures for this stretch of the Marsworth Road, coupled with a redesign of ‘street furniture’ and a move away from the direct segregation of traffic and pedestrian ‘space’, will effectively lead to Site 2 and the Recreation Ground becoming conjoined, thus further enforcing their role as effectively one piece of open green space at the very core of this community.

Pitstone is ultimately a village dominated by visual superlatives – the most obvious being the views across the windmill field to the Chiltern hills in the near distance – and the importance of Sites 1 and 2 cannot in this respect be underestimated. With the impending development of the Pitstone Development Area site, and the aligned desire of Pitstone Parish Council and the two landowners to create a “village green” type ‘heart’ for Pitstone centred on the Recreation Ground and The Crescent, the strategic importance of these sites to the collective vision for Pitstone set out in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan is second to none.
PHOTOGRAPHS

Approaching Pitstone along Marsworth Road from the west

The widening vista as one draws level with Site 2, “The Triangle”

The Triangle: looking west back along Marsworth Road

The Triangle: looking north along Cheddington Road

The Triangle: looking north from Marsworth Road towards The Crescent

The Triangle: looking south across Marsworth Road towards the Recreation Ground
Various views of the allotments looking west / south-west along The Crescent
(Note the well-kept appearance and good upkeep of individual plots)